**Christianity**

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How to Cite This Article

Christianity, the religion instituted in Palestine in the person and work of Jesus Christ and the fellowships of his immediate followers. Subsequently this faith was widely adopted in many nations, and at the end of the 20th century, Christianity was professed by some 33% of the world's population.

Present-day Christianity exhibits three main divisions, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant. These are convenient names rather than full official titles, and a significant number of Christian groups do not fall within any of the three. Despite long separation and much variety, the three main divisions share certain identifying characteristics. These include adoration of Jesus Christ as the second person in the Trinity of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the use of sacred rites, of which the most important are designated sacraments; reverence for the Old Testament and the New Testament as authoritative Holy Scripture; the requirement of a morally disciplined life; and the maintenance of a structure of church government and a body of trained clergy.

Statistics of membership are far from exact, but of the three main divisions, Roman Catholics easily outnumber the other two combined, and Protestants (not including non-Catholic and non-Orthodox Christians who do not deem themselves Protestants) exceed the Orthodox in a ratio of rather more than two to one. Moreover, some 14% of professed Christians do not belong to any of the three major divisions.

The expansion of Christianity as a professed religion has been a marked though somewhat discontinuous feature of Western history. As a result of modern, especially 19th-century, missionary effort, it became the adopted religion of an increasing minority in Asia and Africa and in other areas where it had been virtually unknown. In some nations, especially those with past or current communist governments, it has been repressed at times, but it has never been entirely extinguished. An injurious divisiveness has weakened its force, but this divisiveness has at times yielded to unitive trends. Christianity continues to grow, although at a somewhat reduced rate. Among the world religions, Islam in particular is growing more rapidly.

**Doctrine and Practices**

This summary of Christian doctrine and practice describes tenets and customs common to most Christians but also notes differences among the major divisions. More detailed statements on doctrine and activities can be found in articles on specific churches.

**Beliefs**

The apostolic preaching in which early Christianity was nurtured gave origin to an orderly and comprehensive body of teaching, which, with varying degrees of emphasis, has been familiar to instructed Christians in all centuries. These Christian beliefs are summarized in the Apostles' Creed, which from its beginnings in slightly divergent 2d-century forms of baptismal confession (the "rule of faith") reached its final wording in southern Gaul in about 500 A.D. Most later statements of doctrine, having general authority or more limited acceptance, may be thought of as expansions of this formula, and until recent times the theological work of countless Christian scholars has been shaped by its clauses. Theologians, naturally, have drawn on the works of interpreters of doctrine before them, ultimately turning for authority to the Christian Bible. In addition to the Jewish canon of sacred books, the Bible contains the 27 books of Christian origin that constitute the New Testament. The special emphases in belief that have marked certain eras of reform and revision have been, as a rule, consciously based on a fresh reading of the Bible. The Bible was habitually read, however, in the light of the "analogy of faith," a general sense of its teaching that accorded with the Apostles' Creed. (See also Apostles' Creed; Bible; Bible: Canon and Language; Bible: Growth of Literature; Bible: History; Bible: History of Interpretation; Bible: Religion and Theology; Bible: Text.)

The Christian body of belief has been characteristically stable without becoming stagnant. This distinction is not always perceived in the crises of change, but it becomes apparent on reflection over protracted periods of development. The principle derived from Leviticus 6 by Origen in the 3d century, that teachers of the Word of God are "not to set forth stale doctrines according to the letter, but by God's grace ever to bring forth new truth," has controlled the main course of doctrinal history, often when it was not consciously espoused. The enduring elements of belief take fresh color in every age from current philosophical thought and human conditions. In certain instances this involves painful adjustment to new knowledge. The simple apostolic message had to undergo a confrontation with Hellenic thought patterns; medieval theology met the impact of Aristotelianism; the new cosmology of Copernicus and his even more alarming successors in astronomical science was but slowly assimilated to Christian thinking; and the dismay that arose in some circles because of 19th-century evolutionary biology and biblical criticism still finds echoes. In each instance some have been alienated from Christian belief. The majority, however, have accepted the new light of scholarship with a grateful sense of the enlargement of cherished doctrines rather than their invalidation.

**Beliefs About God.**

Cradled as it was in Judaism, Christianity from the first showed a deep consciousness of the reality of God. Christian teaching about God took from Judaism its notions of divine creation and providence, but it was also marked by increased emphasis on the fatherhood of God, a theme vividly presented in the recorded teachings and prayers of Jesus. At the foundation of the Christian structure of belief is the affirmation of God in terms of creation and of concern for humanity. Humanity is clearly conceived of as in all nations one and (apart from imprecise ideas about the angels) as the crowning work of God's creation. The doctrine of God, now a special area of debate, has in past centuries often been the occasion of disputes. With changed conceptions of the universe and of human participation in the natural order, the point of contact between God and God's handiwork becomes more difficult to establish, or even to conceive. Accordingly, many 20th-century theologians struggled with their sense of the futility of pursuing traditional theology, whether "natural" or "revealed," in the modern intellectual universe. (See God; Agnosticism; Atheism; Theology.)

Christians have always, not without awe and wonder, believed, on the testimony of Scripture and the evidence of human perversity, that the winning power of God's love does not extend equally to all individuals. Yet they have been moved to carry to all the invitation to join their fellowship. Christian belief in "God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth" rests so firmly on experience beyond the range of syllogisms that for most Christians it is likely to be little affected by contrary rational arguments.

**Belief in Christ.**

Belief in Christ has always been the essential point of difference between Christianity and the other great religions. Typically a high concept of Christ pervaded the Christian mind, signalized by phrases such as "Son of God" and "Our Lord and Saviour." The New Testament accounts of his birth of a virgin (Matthew and Luke) and its identification of him with the Logos, or creative and light-giving Word of God (John), together with the reports of his teaching, death, resurrection, ascension, and destined return to earth, entered into the early teaching and are crisply affirmed in the received creeds. The language of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, "Who for us men and for our salvation came down … and was made man," represents a cherished element of faith. The supernatural factors in the accepted teaching about Christ were not without difficulty from the beginning. But there was no less difficulty in excluding them. The church's authoritative doctrine of Christ as divine and human came to rest in the Chalcedonian formula of 451. For many Christians Christ's "two natures in one person" has been an undisputed commonplace; to others, it is an unresolved mystery and object of meditation. There are always a great many Christians who neglect theological definitions in their approach to the person of Christ and are content with the way of piety and devotion. A profound reverential love of Jesus, expressed in a variety of devotional writings, has been and remains a notable aspect of the Christian religion. (See also Christology.)

**Belief in the Holy Spirit.**

Belief in the Holy Spirit has always been affirmed, most intensely in times of group emotion. Yet the Spirit's place in the Trinity has been variously defined. The council of 381, to counter the *Pneumatomachi* ("antagonists of the Spirit") led by Macedonius, deposed bishop of Constantinople, who regarded the Holy Spirit as a creature like the angels, declared that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father." In the West, following Augustine's view, the word *filioque* ("and the Son") was inserted after "from the Father" in liturgical texts. The change was deeply offensive to the Eastern church. It was, however, retained in the Reformation, so that Protestantism agrees with Roman Catholicism rather than with Orthodoxy at this point. In the 20th century the question of how the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son has come under review by Roman Catholic and Orthodox theologians.

**Beliefs About the Church.**

Some form of belief about the church is common to all varieties of Christianity, although there has been in general a weakness of theological definition in this area. Jesus had much to say of the Kingdom of God, which in his teaching was both a society of the faithful into which people were being recruited and an expected life to come. Little that is specific is discernible in his teaching about the church, a name that largely replaced "Kingdom" in the Christian vocabulary. His word to Peter "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (a passage variously explained by the Church Fathers), has been interpreted, along with the early tradition of Peter's ministry in Rome, as authorizing the papal rule of the church. Controversy over this and other matters of clerical ranks and authority has diverted attention from efforts to describe the church in its essential nature. The Protestant Reformers taught that in the Apostles' Creed "holy Catholic Church" and "Communion of Saints" refer to the same entity. The evidence seems conclusive that, whatever of church authority was felt among early Christians, the church arose out of their spontaneous brotherly communion in Jerusalem. The visitation of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost served as confirmation and enhancement of the apostolic message most effectively spoken at the time by Peter.

A new interest attaches to the doctrine of the church as a result of ecumenical discussion, and Vatican Council II advanced far toward defining it for Roman Catholics in language that does not exclude other Christians. Many issues concerning the orders of ministers in the church have hitherto been treated too much in connection with denominational claims. For example, some churches hold to the authority of bishops as successors of the Apostles, while others reject this succession. These issues are coming under more unbiased and historically informed discussion, and this offers promise of a clarification of the nature and functions of the ministry, which should promote its future development in response to need.

**Ethics.**

A Jewish inheritance, including a reverential acceptance of the Ten Commandments, has strongly influenced Christian ethics; but what distinguishes it from any other body of ethical teaching is its appropriation of the teachings of Jesus and its continuity with the early fellowship of believers as interpreted by St. Paul. The motivation of ethical behavior lies not in meeting detailed prescriptions of conduct but in realizing a manner of life morally worthy of holy fellowship in Christ.

In actuality the behavior of Christians has unquestionably been affected by other considerations. These include the Scriptural teaching on the fall of humanity and human sinfulness, concern about future punishment and reward, treatises and sermons on the sins and the virtues, systems of discipline and penance, the teaching of moral philosophers and casuists, and contemporary social standards. But more characteristic are the elements clearly derived from Jesus and St. Paul. Jesus differentiated his teaching from that of his predecessors by affirming that the religious person's love extends even to enemies and that one is to forgive an offending brother not seven times but unceasingly (Matthew 5:43–44; 18:21). In the letters of St. Paul life is transformed for Christians by the fact that they are "members one of another." Since they "walk in love," immorality and covetousness are not even to be mentioned among them. They are to be "subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." In various epistles Christians are enjoined to be active in good deeds, to be gentle toward all, to follow peace, and to "walk honestly towards outsiders." Paul's lofty paean on *agapē* (I Corinthians 13), the divinely inspired love that unites the Christian community, is unique in literature. The Christian's basic understanding of social ethics arises as an extension of this bond of unity and obligation within the communion of believers.

**Worship and Sacraments**

The disciples of Jesus, meeting with his mother and brothers after his departure, "with one accord devoted themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:12–14). The first Christians on occasion met "for the breaking of bread," that is, to celebrate the Eucharist. Admission to membership in the fellowship was by baptism. Common worship, and the specially significant rites historically known as sacraments, are thus attested from the earliest period. Although a hostile environment forced the choice of unfrequented places and inconvenient hours for Christian worship, routines of worship were established. Long before the liberation of the church under Constantine, we find habitual use of certain liturgical elements that have persisted. In the Middle Ages, especially at the greater ecclesiastical centers, the services were marked by multiple variations for seasons and occasions, and by colorful and dramatic pageantry. Anxious criticism of the trend toward elaboration was voiced by some at the time. The Reformation, appealing to Scripture and the early church, brought about in many areas of the West a great simplification of worship. See also Worship.

**Routines of Worship.**

Sunday morning, associated in Christian memory with the Resurrection of Christ, has always been the favored time of worship. This has been made convenient by the recognition under most governments of Sunday as the weekly day of rest. Although the conditions of modern life tend to annul this provision, Sunday still remains the great day of Christian assembly the world over. There is, of course, no attempt to confine common worship to Sundays. Frequent occasions for it are provided on other days. Monasticism developed a detailed system of conventual worship, with seven times ("hours") of prayer and psalmody daily. The Breviary ("abbreviation"), containing these services, was first called by that name when it was revised about 1080 under Pope Gregory VII. Through later revisions it has retained its characteristic use of the Scriptural Psalms, and the singing or reading of Psalms, which has been a leading feature of Reformed and Anglican worship.

The routines of worship are not only weekly, but also involve the annual round of solemn occasions collectively known as the Christian Year. The great feast of Easter has been celebrated in remembrance of Christ's Resurrection from the earliest times. Lent, the period of 40 days (not counting Sundays) before Easter, came to be kept as a season of special penitential abstinence, ending with Holy Week, when the Passion of Christ is vividly recalled in special acts of worship. Easter Day has traditionally brought a great release of gladness, with pealing bells and chanting choirs. The Christian Year begins, however, with the Advent season, which includes the four Sundays preceding Christmas Day. The date, December 25, was that formerly celebrated as the birthday of Mithra, the sun-god, and the feature of friendly gifts reflects other pagan festivities of the winter solstice. A body of later medieval Christmas carols, now familiar in modern form, testifies to the devout happiness that has attended the celebration of Jesus' birth. See also Calendar —Church Calendar.

Popular elements in worship have taken many directions, including the veneration of innumerable martyrs and saints on the traditional days of their deaths. These days being more numerous than the days of the year, All Saints' Day was introduced; since the 8th century it has been celebrated on November 1 in the West. Relics of saints have been treasured by believers, who often ascribe to them miraculous powers. The cult of the Virgin Mary has been promoted largely by popular devotion. The worship of many sects and revival movements features popular spiritual expression, whether in music, such as spirituals; dance; or other, less structured forms.

**Forms of Worship.**

Christian worship, despite its modern variety, generally retains certain of its earliest features. It reflects the influence of the synagogue in the public reading of Holy Scripture, normally with comment or exposition. In 2d century worship the Gospels and Epistles were treated as authoritative Scripture. The Eucharist was preceded by the Kiss of Peace and the collection for the poor. The prayer of consecration began with thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) for redemption, brought to remembrance Christ's Passion, and invoked a blessing on the bread and wine. Very early such enduring liturgical elements as the *Sursum corda* (Lift up your hearts) the *Sanctus,* and the Lord's Prayer found a stated place in the service. Elaborate and nobly phrased liturgies followed by the 4th century, notably at Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, the clergy using a written text. But stability and uniformity were not attained. In the West the Gallican Rite, a prolix liturgy with local variations, gave place about 600 A.D. to the Roman, by comparison simple and concise. In time, however, increasing variety of forms and ceremonies for different occasions, and the use of Latin when it was not understood by most worshipers, tended to make public worship an impressive spectable enacted by the clergy rather than, as earlier, a reliving in faith of the New Testament events. In the 11th century the wine of the sacrament was, probably to avoid profanation, withdrawn from the laity, and from 1215 laypeople were required to communicate only at the Easter communion. The sacraments recognized in the Middle Ages and in modern Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy are: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, extreme unction (anointing of the sick), ordination, and marriage. See also Catholic Church, Roman —Doctrine and Liturgy.

Protestantism, seeking to base worship on Scripture and early church practice, has from its beginnings used in its liturgies the language of the people. It tends to view negatively all ceremonial accretions, and reduces the sacraments to baptism and the Lord's Supper. (See also Communion.) Luther's *Formula missae* (1523) laid a foundation for Lutheran worship, stressing the Words of Institution (Matthew 26:26–28) and authorizing lay Communion in both kinds. Zwingli in 1525 and Luther in his German Mass (1526) introduced vernacular worship. The Strasbourg liturgy of Martin Bucer, based on a Protestant adaptation of the Roman rite, was revised by Calvin in his Form of Prayers … according to the Use of the Ancient Church (1540), from which stem many liturgies of Reformed churches. The Anglican Book of Common Prayer—despite learned criticism, one of the best-loved books of worship and not fundamentally changed since it left Cranmer's hands in 1552—makes selective use of medieval materials and authorizes traditional vestments, which the Puritans rejected. Disputes about public worship have dealt with vestments, postures, gestures, and other externals more than with the words used. In the 20th century, particularly in the 1960s, both Protestants and Catholics have shown a willingness to reconsider long-sanctioned practices.

**Propagation of the Christian Faith**

Prompted by explicit New Testament injunctions, Christianity has taken as its field of mission the whole human race. A desire to bear testimony to his or her faith and way of life is an expected characteristic of each Christian. The expansion of Christianity has been accomplished not less by incidental private contacts, talk, and example than by organized and directed missions. Believers put to flight by persecution have often been agents of conversion among those who gave them refuge, and the testimony of martyrs has been a potent persuasive. Political decisions favorable to Christianity have brought about innumerable nominal conversions and have often afforded opportunity for a genuine work of evangelism. On the other hand, adverse political policies have in extreme instances prevented the permanent growth of a Christian community.

Where church and state have been closely associated, the Christian witness to universality has sometimes failed to such a degree that the state's enemies were regarded as candidates not for conversion but for death by the sword. The church, having without any violence won its way to recognition in the ancient world, was more concerned eight centuries later to kill the Muslims than to win them. It was at the close of the Crusades that the learned Franciscan missionary Raymond Lully (died 1315) pleaded for educational missions employing the languages of the Muslim peoples. "Victory," he declared, "can be won only as Christ sought it, by love and prayer and self-sacrifice." The use of coercion in the promotion of Christianity is wholly rejected by modern Christians, though in some countries discrimination is still practiced in favor of a state-supported church. Under Communist governments Christian means of propagation are narrowly restricted. International Christian missions have become an important phase of modern Christianity.

**Preaching**

In early times preaching, or proclamation, was the characteristic means of spreading Christianity. This method was in the tradition of Jewish prophecy and had long been used by traveling Greek sophists. Preaching became an essential part of worship, and has indeed been largely confined to church pulpits and formal services. Outdoor informal preaching, however, has been a feature of medieval and modern revival movements. The radio and television preaching of today is also usually detached from liturgical worship, and is frequently addressed to non-Christians. A number of the Church Fathers excelled as eloquent preachers able to convince pagan hearers. The 17th century saw an impressive development of pulpit oratory, and this has remained a tradition, especially in France and Scotland. But preaching in its traditional form has now lost some of its importance for the propagation of Christianity. It is in part replaced by dialogue in various forms.

**Education**

Under the aegis of Christianity, learning has flourished, except when impaired by untoward social conditions. While inviting the uneducated into its membership, the Christian church has normally expected of them a preparation by study of the elements of Christian belief. For this purpose the early church devised "catechetical schools," which in some instances reached a remarkable academic maturity. It has habitually taken the initiative in the establishment of schools, not only of theology but also of elementary and advanced learning in other fields. Its doctrinal positions have often been challenged by its own trained scholars, and in former times ecclesiastical authorities adopted strong measures to discourage theological deviation. But there was never a serious inclination to repudiate learning itself. Christian schools have everywhere accompanied Christian missions, and in some countries have greatly expanded the range of education among all classes of the population, making it available to youth of social ranks formerly excluded from educational privileges. Christians have differed, however, in their attitude to literary and scientific studies. Some Christian educators, such as John Amos Comenius, had no hesitation in maintaining that all ascertained knowledge can be harmoniously related to Christian doctrines. Others in past centuries have fought the entrance of unfamiliar knowledge as a challenge to Christianity itself. This polarization has existed since the days of the early Church Fathers. Some of them, in "apologetic" writings addressed to pagans, sought their readers' approval of Christianity on the grounds that it was anticipated by Plato and made the most of pagan parallels to Christian teachings, while others denounced all pagan thought. The divergence here is apt to be particularly embarrassing where the Christian message to non-Christians is involved.

After the invention of printing, religious texts were for many decades the major output of the press. In the early period many small medieval treatises and devotional guidebooks, which had already been circulated in manuscript, found a widened circulation in print. The reformation movement was greatly aided by the enterprise of countless printer-publishers; nor did the Counter-Reformation lack the same service. It was only with the rise of the sciences and of secular fiction that Christianity lost its preeminence in the book trade.

The output of books concerned with Christianity is larger than ever today, though not proportionately so. Bible societies and missionary agencies distribute the Scriptures and theological and devotional literature in quantity throughout the world (see Bible Society). Denominational and nondenominational journalism, learned and popular religious periodicals, and publicity through releases to newspapers have been channels for the spread of Christian propaganda. The modern film and record industries, and broadcasting by radio and television, have already been utilized extensively to promote Christian belief. However, in contrast to early printing, these new inventions have been chiefly employed for other than religious ends. Christian leaders see a crucial task ahead in using the changing means of communication to make a Christian impact upon the world.

**Charity**

Such scriptural admonitions as "Love thy neighbour" and "Do good unto all men" have borne fruit in a concern for the well-being of "all sorts and conditions of men." Christian benevolence toward the needy was early noted with surprise and disapproval by pagan writers and has been fostered at all periods in the church. Over against this, however, the focus of some Christians on preparing for an expected end of the world led them to feel that social action was irrelevant. There has also not infrequently been a fantastic mingling of apocalyptic and utopian elements in Christian attitudes toward social issues. The medieval church, despite its theory of a just war and its practical attempt to limit the ravages of feudal warfare by the Truce of God, in blessing the crusades cancelled any progress toward the abolition of war. Modern Christianity has likewise failed to check the forces that make for war. A few smaller Christian denominations, notably the Quakers, have affirmed the principle of pacifism; and Christians generally are among the most active supporters of the agencies for international peace. The churches systematically encouraged the emancipation of slaves, which was often ceremonially enacted in a service at the altar. From the 4th century Christian hospitals were provided in cities; their number became large during the high Middle Ages. The duties of the clergy included care of the local poor; but the abolition of poverty is a more modern concept. Christians have never been content with the society about them. They have rebuked its evils and worked for its betterment, but sometimes in well-meaning ignorance they may have worsened conditions.

**Organization**

Early Christianity, with members recruited from diversified classes of people, faced problems of discipline and order. As an inevitable alternative to confusion, the early church took on a structure of government. There is no indisputable evidence of a universally accepted procedure either of admission to clerical rank or of the settlement of disputes. In Acts 6, helpers in ministration to widows were chosen by "the whole multitude" and ordained by the Apostles. In Acts 15 a council of the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem decided against certain requirements of Jewish ceremonial. In Acts 20 and in I Clement 44, it seems implied that bishops and presbyters were not differentiated, but Ignatius (about 112) clearly distinguishes them. At Rome bishops were chosen by popular election at a time when at Alexandria they were selected by the presbyters from among themselves. Cyprian taught (251) that the episcopate is a universal corps, in succession to the Apostles, of divinely authorized interpreters of doctrine. But widely variant views of episcopal authority continued to find expression.

**Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.**

Within Roman Catholicism the unique authority accorded to the pope placed the episcopate in a somewhat ambiguous doctrinal position. However, Vatican Council II in 1964 declared bishops the successors of the Apostles, exercising as one body, though never without the Roman pontiff, a collegiate power, and called to be solicitous for the whole church. The hierarchical structure of the church grew in response to practical needs. In the imperial age provincial, or metropolitan, sees were elevated above others "since all who have business gather to the metropolis," as stated in a council of 341. The still higher dignity of patriarch was accorded to the bishops of Jerusalem, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome, each with a prescribed authority over several metropolitans. An important practical measure was the creation in 1059 of the college of cardinals as a body of available Roman clergy empowered to elect a pope and so to counter injurious feudal and imperial pressures. See also Bishop; Cardinal; Clergy.

In the West, church power pyramided up to the papacy; but in the East there was no such centralization, and the patriarchates were disturbed by mutual rivalry and weakened by the Muslim expansion. In the 19th century they were freed from both these causes of deterioration, and they have in some degree recovered status and leadership. The Russian church, an important branch of Eastern Orthodoxy, and the smaller Orthodox units in states now Communist, are tolerated under severe restrictions.

**Protestant Church Organization.**

Protestant churches offer considerable variety in organization and ministry. Lutheran and Reformed communions have generally been indifferent or antagonistic to hierarchical episcopacy. But Luther and the other Reformers had no objection to bishops as such. It was the opposition of most bishops to reform that called forth the Reformers' harsh, condemnatory utterances against the episcopal order. In German Lutheranism the principal governing units have been territorial consistories, related in origin to the medieval episcopal courts but under the authority of the civil government; the members are jurists, theologians, and area superintendents. But an episcopal succession was maintained in the Swedish Reformation, and episcopal organization was adopted in Denmark and Norway. Lutheranism in America has everywhere adopted synodical government. It was under the influence of the Pietist Henry Melchior Mühlenberg that the first American Lutheran synod was held (1748), a majority of those present being laymen. A constitution of 1778 for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America secured synodical rule with lay representation. The Scandinavian branches of Lutheran churches in America are also governed synodically and without bishops.

Calvin fully approved of the episcopate as it was developed in the early centuries and did not object to contemporary bishops if they adopted evangelical principles; but the bishop of Geneva had been expelled before Calvin came, and there was no desire to have the office renewed. At the close of the Reformation era the introduction of bishops in Scotland by royal appointment called forth a strong antiepiscopal movement. The Reformed church of Hungary, on the other hand, calls its chief officers bishops. Generally the Reformed and Presbyterian churches have been guided and governed by elective assemblies. In French Protestantism there emerged, in ascending order of authority, the local consistory, the colloquy for a number of congregations, the provincial synod, and the national synod.

In Scottish Presbyterianism the local session of lay elders with the minister presiding, the presbytery of neighboring ministers and representative elders, the provincial synod, and the general assembly constitute a similar series. Each of these ruling bodies has its own defined range of authority, and each consists of ministers and laypeople. The governing decisions are thus made by regularly constituted representative bodies, in no case by an individual person. The system may be described as "conciliar," and can be related historically to medieval conciliarism and many other pre-Reformation experiments in representative government in church and state. One of the most consistent medieval examples is seen in the Dominican order with its similarly stratified governing chapters. A recent trend in Protestantism is to make increasing use of specially appointed departmental secretaries and experts, who attend to administrative matters for which synodical action would be inconvenient.

Anglicanism in all its branches has been consistently episcopal, though with considerable adaptation to national and local conditions.

**Criticism of the Organized Church.**

From the time when Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire until modern times most churches have been "established" in the sense of being state-connected and -maintained. This has often involved a large measure of state control, which in turn has been met by protests and exaggerated ecclesiastical claims. The Christian conscience can never equate its standards with those of public opinion or of political expediency.

Side by side with the historic established churches there have been countless separated communions, whose leaders were moved to reject practices approved or tolerated in the state church. In some instances these have testified through centuries against what they regard as an inferior type of Christianity. In this way Quakers and Methodists and various Nonconformist and secessionist bodies have made a cumulative impression even upon the churches they have left. The early Christian ascetics, by their adoption of a life of hardship, similarly offered a criticism of successful and relaxed Christianity; and later religious orders showed, in the formative stage at least, an earnestness not prevalent in the routine life of the church. A number of these dedicated groups, especially Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits, made it their task to impart new reality to the life of the hierarchical church itself. A vast number of voluntary group movements have also stimulated the Protestant churches from within, producing their own organizations in more or less harmonious relation with the ecclesiastical structure. See also Catholic Church, Roman —Organization; Protestantism.

**Comparison With Other Major Religions**

Christianity has never ceased to be in contact with Judaism and is now in direct confrontation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. Statistics, merely approximate, make Christians almost as numerous as the combined membership of the other four faiths. Together with them, Christianity is today challenged by materialism and militant atheism, a situation that tends to create a bond of sympathy between religions even where differences are fully recognized.

The centrality of Christ as the divine-human agent of salvation has no parallel in the other world religions, though his ethical teaching appeals to individuals in them all. Hinduism retains primitive elements uncongenial to Christianity, though its principle of *ahimsa,* or nonviolence based on reverence for all life, has appealed to some Christians, and some modern Hindu sects incorporate elements of Christian teaching. The Buddhist way of salvation—that of emancipation, without the aid of any deity, from the cravings that cause humanity's suffering and from the unhappy cycle of rebirth—is remote from Christian concepts. But Buddhism has greatly changed with its historical expansion. The Zen Buddhism of Japan, with its intense meditation in quest of the decisive enlightenment within this life, has fascinated some Christian minds. Today, however, Buddhism seems entering on an activist and political trend. Islam, worshiping "no god but Allah" and peculiarly resistent to Christian persuasion, has been during recent decades actively engaged in missions, chiefly in Africa. While tolerance and mutual appreciation grow, contrasts also stand out the more with deepening acquaintance, and no future coalescence among the great religions seems now indicated. See Religion and articles on major religions.

**History**

This survey of the history of Christianity begins with the spread of the church in the ancient world. The very beginnings of Christianity are described in other articles. See Bible: History; Gospels; Jesus Christ.

**Early Christianity**

When Christianity arose, imperial Rome had provided a system of roads and sea-lanes by which cultural and religious influences could readily move through every province. The people of the empire were hungry for a satisfying religion. A score of mystery religions were attracting some from all ranks of society. No doubt a knowledge of their sacred rites and savior gods led the pagan mind nearer to Christian concepts. The shrines of new and old deities were perplexing in number. Many texts reveal that pagans felt an unanswered need to escape an addiction to sin. Some cults engaged in frenzied penances, and on another level, philosophers became the guides of troubled souls. A vaguely monotheistic belief arose among philosophical writers, who habitually spoke of God in the singular number. Everywhere some people were turning to Judaism and attending synagogues. Many of these Gentile "God-fearers" were early won over to the Christian community. The artificial cult of the emperor failed as a unifying element amid religious confusion. Christianity came with a more profound answer. Appropriating to itself the sacred books of Israel and the values of Jewish monotheism, it soon added to its treasury of authoritative texts the books of the New Testament, which convey a trinitarian view of deity, a concept less startling than Judaism offered to prospective converts from polytheism.

Judaism had secured the right to exist through the empire, and so long as Christians were mainly recruited from Gentiles who frequented the synagogues, they were mistaken for a Jewish sect. But it was soon recognized that, quite without state authorization, a vigorous new religion had arisen, addressing itself to every race and class. Its growth was alarming to old-fashioned people, who deplored the Christian desertion of the temples, rejection of animal sacrifices, avoidance of pagan festivals, and strict and distinctive morals. Slanderous rumors were circulated ascribing to the Christians loathsome rites and treasonable intentions. Christian apologists wrote effective refutations of these falsehoods and made a brilliant plea for the legal recognition of Christianity. From their treatises, together with a few extant lively literary attacks on Christianity, we glimpse a protracted contest in persuasion. The treasures of Hellenic philosophy as well as Judaic faith were being drawn into the stream of Christian thought. Clement of Alexandria and especially his pupil Origen made a masterly use for the Christian cause of the learning of earlier ages.

**Expansion and Development.**

The early documents tell us little of other apostolic missions than those of Paul. The tradition of Peter's sojourn and leadership in Rome is strong, but specific facts are meager. There seems some possibility that the see of Alexandria was founded from Rome by Mark, acting for Peter. It is typical that, about 112, Pliny as governor of Bithynia (now part of Turkey) found that province teeming with Christians, though we have no evidence of previous missionary effort there. A similar lack of information baffles us in other areas, some of them beyond the bounds of the empire. About 200 A.D., Tertullian wrote airily of "places of the Britons not reached by the Romans but subjugated to Christ," while far across the Roman world, in northwestern Mesopotamia, King Abgar IX held Christian teachers in special favor. The planned or unplanned beginnings of Christianity in such localities must remain unknown. Traditions that assign mission fields to Andrew, Thomas, Bartholomew, and other apostles or their associates are at most unverified possibilities.

Organization varied with place and circumstances. Prevailingly in churches of synagogue origin the leaders were called *presbyteroi* whatever their functions, and among these the presbyter who conducted the worship was called *episcopos,* bishop. Another important task of the bishop was the supervision of the deacons in the administration of funds. In an early stage of the Christian ministry we find a class of itinerant evangelists, who brought through their visits a spiritual stimulation, and others, known as prophets, whose charismatic utterances sometimes became ecstatic. Soon, however, these ministers lost their usefulness, and what was of value in the functions they exercised devolved chiefly upon the bishops. When not prevented by persecution, synods of bishops were held to settle troublesome issues. But it was later, under the patronage of Christian emperors, that the church's network of organization became general.

**The Church, the Empire, and the Councils.**

The pagan emperors gave no consistent answer to the problem posed for them by Christianity. Many of them adopted repressive measures but avoided general persecution. The serious effort of Decius and Valerian (249–260) to destroy the church was followed by the "long peace" instituted by Gallienus. But in 303 Diocletian and the fanatical Galerius resumed with enhanced cruelty the policy of suppression. From 305, when Diocletian abdicated, Galerius added thousands to the army of martyrs. But in 311 the dying persecutor acknowledged defeat and asked the Christians for their prayers. It remained for Constantine, coming victoriously from Britain and Gaul, to introduce, in 313, the new era of recognition and preferential treatment of the church. The rise of an entirely peaceable religion, within three centuries, to this point of triumph over the supreme secular power remains one of the most impressive phenomena of history.

Intimate relations between church and empire were at once established. But differences and rivalries within the church now came to the surface, and Constantine found himself mediating between Christians who had lately risked their lives together. The Donatist schism over the readmission of those who had lapsed in persecution, and the Arian controversy over the place of Christ in the Trinity, each led to a council of bishops convoked by the Emperor. The second of these, held at Nicaea in Bithynia in 325, is the first of those councils regarded as "ecumenical." Most of the 300 bishops present were from Eastern parts, but the able Hosius of Córdoba was in the Emperor's confidence, and the pope was represented by legates. Constantine himself joined intimately in the discussions and actually proposed the acceptance of the disputed word *homoousios* (consubstantial), by which the council affirmed against the Arians the equality of Christ with the Father. See also Constantine I; Nicaea, First Council of.

Theodosius I summoned the second ecumenical council, held at Constantinople in 381. A very significant ecumenical council was the fourth, convened at Chalcedon in 451. The presence of Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcheria at decisive moments was a factor in its success. This council, to close a long controversy, declared the dogma of the unconfused and unseparated divine and human natures in Christ (see Chalcedon, Council of). However, the Monophysite (one nature) schism ensued, severing from orthodox unity Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and, a little later, Abyssinia and Armenia.

During the period before Chalcedon most of the eminent Christian scholars known as the Church Fathers lived and wrote, leaving a lasting treasury of theology and ethics. Their use of nonscriptural terms from Greek thought both clarified and complicated Christian theology. See also Fathers of the Church.

**Early Monasticism.**

Christian life and literature in this period felt the rising influence of an ascetic movement that, though not wholly Christian in origin, reached its fullest expression in Christian monasticism. Reacting against worldliness in the church, ascetics went to desert solitudes in Egypt for meditation and prayer. As their numbers multiplied, they drew together in companies and accepted guidance from experienced leaders such as Anthony (died 356) and Pachomius (died 346). The Rule of Pachomius was followed by many settlements in and beyond Egypt. But it was the Rule of Basil of Caesarea (died 379) that became normative for Eastern monasticism; while Benedict of Nursia (died about 555) in his *Regula monachorum* furnished the enduring pattern for that of the West. See Basil, St.; Benedict, St.; Monasticism.

**Architecture and Church Art.**

During the persecutions most buildings for Christian worship were destroyed. In the 4th century numerous large churches were built in an adaptation of the basilica, or palace, style. They were oblong and had the table, or altar, at the eastern end with a semicircular apse behind it, and some, including St. John Lateran at Rome, had a spacious *atrium* between the narthex, or porch, and the nave. Very different is the great domed cathedral of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) in Constantinople, the finest of many structures of its kind, planned for Emperor Justinian by Anthemius of Tralles and completed in 547. A simple though varied Christian art had flourished, especially in catacomb tombs at Rome and elsewhere, since the 2d century, and pictorial art, chiefly in mosaics on walls and floors of churches, was employed with increasing freedom. In Hagia Sophia mosaics on gold background and a variety of metal ornaments provided splendor and instruction. Christian sculpture had its beginnings chiefly in figures chiseled on marble sarcophagi. They treat with vigor Biblical themes, often in series, using Old Testament incidents with allegorical allusion to Christian beliefs. Rounded figures were avoided as suggestive of pagan idols. See Architecture; Catacombs; Cathedrals and Churches.

**Medieval Christianity**

**The Emergence of Christendom and the Conversion of New Nations.**

The word "Christendom" is here used of the aggregate of territories in which the church and the secular authority constituted two organs of one society. Not long after Emperor Julian's futile promotion of a pagan revival (361–363), the suppression of paganism became, under Theodosius, a fixed imperial policy (392). Ulphilas brought Christianity in its Arian form to the Goths, and it reached the other early Germanic invaders before they entered the empire. The Briton Patrick, in a great missionary career, planted orthodox Christianity firmly in Ireland in the 5th century. The powerful Franks and Anglo-Saxons came into Gaul and Britain, respectively, as pagans, to be afterward converted to Nicene orthodoxy. Missionary monks sent to Canterbury by Gregory I in 597 had a limited success in southern England, but the conversion of the English owed more to Irish monks, who came either from their famous Scottish center in Iona (founded in 563) or directly from Ireland. A long-continued Irish monastic migration to the Continent (about 500–1000) contributed immensely to the actual Christianization of Europe and shed a light of learning in the "dark age."

Although a good many English missionaries had been trained by Irish teachers—including Willibrod (died 734), church founder in Frisia—Boniface of Crediton (died 754), "Apostle of the Germans," was not one of them. Strongly bound to the papacy, and a great organizer, he was unfavorable to the individualistic Irish.

Some Eastern monks too were distinguished missionaries. Moravia received Christian instruction from Cyril and Methodius, Greeks from Salonika, who for their translations created a Slavonic alphabet. It was mainly on the initiative of kings and rulers that Christianity came to be adopted in Bohemia, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Russia, and Prussia. The undeniably sincere piety of Vladimir I of Russia (baptized 988) and of Stephen I of Hungary (997–1038) earned for them recognition as saints. The Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic peoples that the Roman Empire had encountered on its frontiers were thus by about 1000 A.D. within the borders of Christendom.

**The Church and Secular Powers in Alliance and Conflict.**

The alliance of ecclesiastical and secular power was far from harmonious. Emphatic claims of their superiority to princes were stated from time to time by vigorous popes, most explicitly by Gelasius I in 494; and the ecclesiastical statesmen Leo I (reigned 440–461), Gregory I (reigned 590–604), and Nicholas I (reigned 858–867) gave high importance to the papal office. But such distinction was not maintained. Most of the popes had to adjust their policies to those of princes who treated them as subjects or at most colleagues. Charlemagne wrote to Leo III, who had crowned him emperor, comparing himself to Moses and Leo to Aaron. The Western empire so created proved weak and unstable both as ally and as adversary of the papacy. In the East, Justinian (reigned 527–565) regarded himself as head of the Christian society, which embraced both church and state. The pattern thus presented remained characteristic of the lands of Eastern Orthodoxy. A few courageous Greek and Russian prelates affirmed some measure of church autonomy, but without cumulative effect.

In the 11th century the papacy was rescued by the empire from subservience to local factions. Taking on new vigor, it broke from imperial control and, in the vivid personality of Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII, reigned 1073–1085), asserted authority over emperors and kings. The habitual investiture of bishops with their symbols of office by secular rulers, with its implication of subjection to the lay power even in things spiritual, was intolerable to Hildebrand and his successors. Hildebrand joined battle with Emperor Henry IV, who to secure his throne underwent a humiliating act of penance. Improving on Gelasius, Hildebrand regarded himself as the head of Christendom and indeed of the world, with a universal right to depose princes and absolve their subjects from allegiance. He met with reverses, but his claims were insistently reasserted by later popes. Agreements for England (1107) and for Germany (1122), by which both powers were to share the ceremony of investiture, did not close the controversy, since it left the underlying question of the right to appoint bishops unresolved. Also involved were disputes over the exemption of clerical offenders from trial in secular courts, a major factor in the struggle between Archbishop Thomas à Becket (died 1170) and King Henry II. The proud emperor Frederick Barbarossa, defeated in a long war, knelt in surrender to Alexander III (1177). The policy of Innocent III (reigned 1198–1215) included a free use against recalcitrant rulers of both excommunication of the person and interdict, which deprived the people from the sacraments until submission should follow. The lapse of the imperial office from 1254 to 1273 and its reduced importance thereafter transferred the struggle to national ground. Rejection by the French king Philip IV of the high demands of Boniface VIII occasioned Boniface's downfall (1303), ending an era of papal ascendancy. See also Catholic Church, Roman: History; biographies of Gregory VII and other popes.

**Christendom Against Islam: Great Wars of the Middle Ages.**

After the first great era of Muslim military expansion, relations between Christendom and Islamic states remained hostile. In the 8th century the horns of a great Muslim crescent were pointed toward Constantinople in the east and Frankish Gaul in the west. Slowly the Christian kingdoms that arose in Spain gained strength to roll back the invaders. Having united politically under Ferdinand and Isabella (1469), the Spaniards captured the stronghold of Granada, extinguishing Muslim power (1492).

In the East the Turks had centuries earlier replaced the Arabs as assailants of the Christian frontiers, had snatched most of the Byzantine territory in Asia Minor, and then approached Constantinople. Western pilgrims to the Christian holy places in Palestine were molested, and tales of their sufferings aroused deep resentment. In 1095, Eastern Emperor Alexius appealed to Pope Urban II for Western help. Urban's rhetoric at the Council of Clermont launched the first of the series of Crusades that for two centuries were to drain off into foreign wars the predatory feudal militarism of the West. Jerusalem was twice won and twice lost by the Crusaders. Constantinople was taken by the Venetians in 1204 but recovered in 1261 by the Eastern Christians, who thereafter defended their diminishing empire till 1453. The historic capital then fell to the Ottoman Turks, and the Balkan Peninsula later came wholly under their sway. See Crusades.

During the same era Mongols from central China, who before 1250 became Muslims, exchanged atrocities with the Turks in Asia Minor and overran most of Russia, which they ruled and ravaged (1224–1480). The heroic leadership of St. Sergius of Radonezh (died 1392) turned the tide in favor of Christian Russia. Centered now in Moscow, Russian Christianity entered a new era of development. After 1453 Russia regarded itself as heir to the Byzantine state and church, and Moscow as the Third Rome.

**Medieval Faith and Morals.**

The flowering of medieval culture was delayed until the disorders of the age of invasion had given place to more stable conditions. The names of Photius (died 891), worldly patriarch and historical scholar, and Michael Psellus the Younger (died about 1078), a Platonist of prodigious learning, are sufficient to suggest the intermittent flame of intellectual glory in the Greek church. In the West the great scholastics had their forerunners. The Irishman Johannes Scotus Erigena (died about 877), the first Western scholar since the 5th century to make effective use of Greek sources, outclassed and alienated his contemporaries; but the Platonic cast of his thought was not without influence. Plato, also, through Augustine, enlivened the mind of Anselm of Canterbury (died 1109) and made possible his ontological argument that God exists since God is "the highest thinkable."

After Anselm, intellectual advance was cumulative. Prefaced by the rise of monastic and cathedral schools with instruction in the seven liberal arts, the early universities of Salerno, Bologna, Paris, and Oxford afforded protracted studies in medicine, law, and theology. Their teachers were stimulated by the challenge of a body of learned texts that reached them through Arabic and Jewish scholars in Spain and Sicily. At the center of this new learning were Aristotle's scientific writings with the commentaries of Averroës of Córdoba (died 1198). It was the achievement of the Dominicans Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas to capture Aristotle for theology while straining out the Averroistic "eternity of matter" and denial of immortality. But the scholastics differed among themselves hardly less than modern thinkers. The Franciscan Bonaventure (died 1274) represents a mystical Platonic-Augustinian strain, asserting the reality of universal ideas. But Platonic realism also had its perils for theology, inducing a trend to pantheism. Some later scholastics, notably William of Occam, were content to sever theological from philosophical truth. Christian doctrines were for faith, not for rational proof. A strong emphasis on divine predestination was voiced by the Oxford scholar Thomas Bradwardine (died 1349).

The condemned heresies of scholars were numerous and varied, as were also the popular movements stamped as heretical. The Waldenses and Lollards, with their devotion to the Bible, in some respects anticipated the Reformation. The Albigenses rather looked backward to the dualistic Bogomils of early centuries (see Albigenses). The Inquisition, which took its origin as a legal substitute for lynching, was from 1232 engaged in a vast effort to detect and punish heretics, using the harsh court procedures of the age and, with the cooperation of "the secular arm," dooming countless thousands to death by fire.

In other ways church authority reached the laity more helpfully. In the preaching of the friars and in many writings addressed to pastors and preachers, not only expositions of the Creed and Commandments but also directions for the moral guidance of laypeople on such topics as the deadly sins, the cardinal virtues, and the works of mercy were made familiar.

**Schism of East and West.**

Craving unity, the church was plagued with schism. The Monophysites resisted Byzantine approaches (432, 638, 648) and, with numerous sectarian variations, continued to spread. The Patriarch John the Faster drew the shocked condemnation of Pope Gregory I by assuming the title "Ecumenical Bishop." The papal coronation of Charlemagne, a challenge to the Eastern empire, increased the alienation of East and West. The Western insertion of the term *filioque* in the Nicene Creed was ably attacked by Photius (about 885) and thereafter by numerous Greek and Russian theologians. The final schism between East and West took place in 1054 and was enacted in Constantinople between emissaries of Leo IX and Patriarch Michael Cerularius, who had earlier assailed the Westerns for the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist. Attempts to end the schism at the first Council of Lyons (1274) and the Council of Florence (1439) were futile. The Greeks at Florence, hoping for aid against the Turks, surrendered most of their earlier contentions, but their concessions were angrily repudiated in the East.

The papacy itself was frequently disturbed by the elevation of antipopes subservient to emperors. From 1080 to 1180 this was a prominent feature of imperial policy. The causes of the Great Western Schism were also political. The popes had resided in Avignon from 1309, where they were under French influence. Pope Gregory XI, urged by Catherine of Siena and others, courageously removed to Rome in 1377. His successor alienated the French cardinals, who pronounced his deposition and elected their own pope (1378). Residing at Avignon, the schismatic popes for 40 years contested with Rome for the allegiance of Europe.

**Conciliarism.**

From the time of Boniface VIII various proposals had been made to settle papal affairs by means of a general council. Thus was developed the doctrine of conciliarism, the supremacy of representative councils. When other attempts to end the papal schism failed, the conciliar arguments of John Gerson and Peter d'Ailly, doctors of Paris, induced a group of cardinals from either side to cooperate in preparing the way for the Council of Pisa (1409). Dismissing two popes, it elected a third, unexpectedly making the schism triple. But the great Council of Constance (1414–1418) induced the Roman Pope to abdicate and successfully deposed the other claimants. In 1417 the cardinals present elected Martin V, who in 1420 brought the united papacy back permanently to Rome. See also Constance, Council of.

**Medieval Art, Architecture, and Music.**

Byzantine architecture exhibits continuity with little progress, the most marked change being the frequent use of a ground plan in the shape of a Greek cross, the arms being of equal measurements. Russian churches imitated the various Byzantine models, featuring interior splendor. In the West, church architecture made repeated and surprising advances. About 1000 A.D., after an era in which more churches had been destroyed than built, a new "array of white sanctuaries" appeared. These were in the sturdy Romanesque style, and were often large, though, using as they did the rounded arch, they could not be high. They were improved with a clerestory, whose windows admitted sufficient light, and with a wide transept, which with the long nave gave them the form of a Latin cross. There was much variety and experimentation. See Romanesque Art and Architecture.

In Normandy an approach to Gothic is seen in the introduction of ribbed vaulting and an elementary flying buttress. The successful use of the pointed arch, the determinative feature of Gothic, was developed in the 12th century by men of great talent in the Île de France. The height of the structure could now be greatly increased and the walls lightened to become mere framework for stained glass windows glowing with countless pictured lessons for the faithful. The lofty cathedrals with their towers and flying buttresses produced an external view unmatched by any other type of edifice, leading eye and thought toward high heaven. The arts of the sculptor and metalworker were employed with increasing freedom, which permitted a mingling of humor with symbolism. See Gothic Art and Architecture.

In the same era, church music was intensely cultivated and attained new variety and sophistication. From the earlier single-line melody of the Gregorian chant, composers moved to polyphonic forms of increasing complexity. In the 15th century these forms tended to be more delightful than devotional. See Gregorian Chant.

**The Later Middle Ages: Decline and Attempted Reform.**

With all its fruits of religious genius, the medieval period ended with a sense of frustration. The word "reform" rings through the literature concerned with the welfare of the church and of Christendom. The failure of the Crusades in their original purpose, the prevalence of abuses in the life of the clergy, the decline of the religious orders from their early zeal, and the entanglements of the papacy in worldly affairs all tended to create a mood of disillusionment and distrust. Laymen were becoming more literate and more vocal in criticism of ecclesiastics. The literature of satirical exposure and proposed reformation became abundant everywhere. Earnest preachers continued to testify to the essentials of Christianity, and in many homes there was Christian instruction and prayer. The greatly expanded pilgrimage life of the 15th century marks the rising religious anxiety of the time. The powerful hymn *Dies irae,* sung at funerals, gave utterance to the foreboding that had replaced the early note of joyous faith. When printers, long before Luther, began to publish vernacular Bibles, the demand was far greater than the supply.

The Biblical pre-Reformers, Wyclif in England and Hus in Bohemia, lacking the help of printers, had little success (see Hussites). The conciliarists were concerned for a fundamental reform of the church, yet it was the conciliarists at Constance who were responsible for the death of Hus (1415). That council's elaborately prepared reforming decrees were designed to reduce the pope's control and to correct detailed abuses; but the revived papacy was to condemn conciliarism and neglect most of these reform measures. In the century after Constance no pope made the spiritual and moral condition of the church his chief concern. The most zealous of reforming spirits before Luther was Savonarola, who in his denunciation of clerical misconduct had the passion of a Hebrew prophet. His agitation for a new reformed council set the train of events leading to his death in 1498.

**Christianity in Modern Times**

Many forces, both religious and secular, combined to produce the Protestant revolt and the Reformation. The history of the Reformation era is covered in Protestantism; Reformation; Catholic Church, Roman: History; and related articles such as Luther, Martin; and Calvin, John.

**Change and Reform Since the Reformation.**

During the past four centuries Christianity has undergone great changes. The Reformation movement, in its reliance on the Bible and its emphasis on the principles of justification by faith, the communion of saints, and the priesthood of believers, gave answers to religious problems that were satisfying to many. It was not, however, a single movement in organization, but arose spontaneously in various nations, taking over the old parishes and uniting them nationally or territorially where governments were favorable, and elsewhere organizing local congregations and drawing them together in a national or territorial connection. From the churches so formed numerous new movements emerged in separate units, to issue in our time in hundreds of denominations. Some of these are so naïve in their self-approval as to be largely indifferent to the Holy Catholic Church visible outside their ranks ("Catholic" here meaning universal and implying the fellowship of all Christians). However, this attitude is rapidly breaking down as all sects are exposed to similar problems and the flow of common ideas. Indeed it has been among the characteristic teachings of Protestantism that the church reformed is still to be reformed, and accordingly that advance in the appropriation of truth is a normal element in Christian life. In the historic tendency of Protestantism to split into new units it is not easy to evaluate motives. In many instances, however, there was a sincere effort to reach a new level in the realization of essential Christianity, even if this was somewhat mixed with willful disregard of the values of fellowship.

Another feature of the religious scene is the growth of strong cult movements, such as Christian Science, Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses. These have their own sacred scriptures and did not originate in the Reformation, but recruit their membership largely from among nominal Protestants. Protestantism has been widely affected by certain movements that were not by intention separative though in some instances resulting eventually in autonomous churches, notably English and American Puritanism, Dutch and German Pietism, and the Evangelical Revival with Methodism as its product.

Roman Catholicism recovered religious energy in the Counter-Reformation but lost its political status as a result of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) and subsequent national movements. It suffered inner conflicts over Jansenism, Gallicanism, Febronianism, Liberalism, and Modernism, but was able to avoid serious losses from schisms and to move into the 20th century with impressive strength.

Eastern Orthodoxy was drawn into discussion with Lutherans in the 16th and Reformed and Anglican theologians in the 17th centuries, but until the 19th century it remained largely unaffected by, and without influence in, Western Christian thought. The Russian church was stirred by controversy over liturgical reforms, in course of which the brilliant and impulsive Patriarch Nikon (died 1681) was deposed for his revision of liturgical texts. The Westernizing and secularizing policy of Peter the Great was countered by the piety of the Elders (*Startsy*), who for two centuries practiced a ministry of soul-guidance to countless pilgrim inquirers.

**Churches and Secular Rulers.**

In modern times there have been numerous church-state conflicts; these have been attended by fresh thinking and have brought some solutions that may be expected to have permanence. When the modern era began, the concept of a church detached from the state was unfamiliar and unattractive. The state-connected Lutheran churches of Germany were subject to a large measure of control by the princes, who in Luther's thought had been charged with responsibility in church matters in time of difficulty. The tie with government remained firm despite political changes. The Reformed churches contended for autonomy against state control. Where governments were favorable, as in Geneva, this meant cooperation, with defined separate functions, rather than detachment.

In Scotland there was a protracted conflict in which the church repeatedly rejected the royal policy. In the 18th and 19th centuries a crucial struggle took place over patronage in the appointment of ministers as against the free call of the congregation and action by presbyteries. A number of secessions from the Church of Scotland took place, while the dominant "Moderate" party preferred patronage to controversy. But in 1843 occurred the "Disruption," in which more than one third of the ministers left the General Assembly, surrendering their livings, to organize the Free Church.

The Church of England, having lost its exclusive status by the Toleration Act of 1689, suffered unwholesome influences from government intervention. In 1717 a Whig administration abruptly suppressed its chief organ, the Convocation of Canterbury; it was revived only in 1852. Meanwhile ecclesiastical abuses mounted, most of them connected with the state's influence. The spell was broken by the Tractarian Movement, which began with Keble's denunciation of "the national apostasy" in 1833.

French Protestantism after long harassment was suppressed in 1683. Most known Protestants fled abroad, but a remnant persisted in France until freed in the French Revolution. In their *Declaration of Gallican Liberties* (1682) the French Roman Catholic clergy in collaboration with Louis XIV denied the secular claims of the papacy and asserted the superiority of a general council over the pope.

In German areas Febronianism corresponded to Gallicanism. Bishop Nicholas von Hontheim ("Febronius") in *The State of the Church* (1763) argued that the pope is not "universal bishop" but is subject to councils. The book shaped the policy of Joseph II of Austria, whose edict of toleration (1781) freed his Lutheran, Calvinist, and Orthodox subjects to worship as they wished.

Many Roman Catholics favored the freer atmosphere of the age, since it accorded to the church independence in its own sphere. The famous slogan of Cavour, "a free church in a free state," was borrowed from Montalembert, lay leader of the Liberal Catholic party in France. But the papacy under Pius IX reasserted papal supremacy, and the first Vatican Council affirmed the infallibility of the pope in 1870. After new setbacks in republican France, Leo XIII's policy alleviated the church-state tension, but a widespread anticlericalism prevailed to bring disestablishment of the French church in 1905. In Germany, Leo succeeded in allaying the strife that his predecessor had waged with Otto von Bismarck (the Kulturkampf); but he remained at odds with the new Italy, which had seized the papal states in 1870. See also Anticlericalism; Church and State.

In Russia, Peter the Great in 1721 set up the Holy Synod as an instrument for the control of the church. But the imperial policy was unstable. The mystical Alexander I founded (1815) the Holy Alliance, which till 1830 functioned feebly in an absolutist spirit. Moscow's one great metropolitan, Philaret Drozdov (died 1867), felt compelled to live in solitary retirement. He is credited, however, with the draft of the 1861 proclamation freeing the Russian serfs. After 1917 the Soviet regime attempted to destroy the national church and the numerous sects of Russia. But Christianity proved tenacious. During the war crisis (1943) the Orthodox Church was permitted to elect a patriarch; but its potential leaders were in exile.

During the century prior to 1914 the political liberation of the Balkan nations from Turkish rule made possible the establishment of national Orthodox churches in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and what is now Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Yugoslavia. These were dissociated from Constantinople, which remained in Turkish hands, and with the exception of Greece have since formed special relations with Moscow.

**Christian Missions and Migrations.**

From Christian communities and churches missions have gone forth to all parts of the globe. If the first three centuries of our era witnessed the Christian infiltration of the Roman Empire, the last four centuries (the 17th to 20th) have achieved a like result throughout the world. Christians do not look for any international government to arise that will give their faith preferred treatment or attempt the suppression of others. But nothing in the modern history of Christianity is more important than its mission in new fields, where it has been instrumental in changing conditions in a degree far greater than would be indicated by a count of adherents.

It was not the Crusades but the age of discovery and colonial settlement that set the stage for the rise of modern missions. The Spaniard Bartholomé de las Casas (died 1566), who in course of his labors became a Dominican, set a pattern of missionary devotion in South and Central America, befriending the Indians against their Spanish masters. The early Jesuits with extraordinary zeal carried on missions in China, Japan, the Philippines, and the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of Africa and South America. Important for Roman Catholicism was the establishment of the Congregation of the Propaganda (*Congregatio de propaganda fide*) in 1622, coordinating the church's missions throughout the world. (See Catholic Church, Roman —Activities.) The early 18th century saw the spread of Russian Orthodoxy, with Russian government, from the Urals to the Bering Strait.

The Reformation leaders were not indifferent to missions—Calvin's Geneva actually sent a dedicated band of missionaries to Brazil in 1556. Yet it was later that Protestant nations made colonial settlements that could be footholds for mission work. The beginnings of a continuous foreign missionary movement may be seen in the German Pietist mission in India (1709) and the widespread work of groups of Moravians led by Count Zinzendorf, starting in 1732. But it was British and American evangelicals of various denominations who took the leadership in the expansion of mission effort and organization through the 19th century. The story of their work shows a long roll of brilliant and devoted missionaries, a series of missionary societies, church missionary boards, and other supporting agencies in the sending countries, and a vast amount of printed material including translations of the Bible and other books into some 1,300 languages, many of which had never before been reduced to writing. Modern missions for the most part exhibit rare, unselfish dedication. Though some missionaries have been glad of the protection of colonial powers, colonial commercial interests have sometimes resented their presence as possible defenders of the people against exploitation. Schools, universities, and medical centers have accompanied most Christian missions. Church-supported schools have contributed to a general rise in literacy; moreover, a large proportion of the national leadership of many African and Asian states has come from those educated in Christian schools. See also Missionary Movements.

**Revival Movements.**

All parts of the modern church have been stimulated by revivals of various kinds. Some of these have begun in ways that surprised all concerned, as when Jonathan Edwards was astonished in 1734 by responses from concerned hearers of an argumentative sermon. Unexpected manifestations of religious emotion attended the itinerant preaching of Howel Harris in Wales in 1735 and George Whitefield's outdoor sermons at Bristol in 1739. During the same decade, preaching stirred the parishes of western Scotland. Somewhat earlier Theodore Jacob Frelinghuysen had begun among his Dutch Reformed people in Raritan, New Jersey, a sober revival that spread through the work of Gilbert Tennent to Pennsylvania Presbyterians. Whitefield, a dramatic orator, paid seven visits to America, where his preaching is a distinct feature of colonial religious history from 1739 to 1770. He and his friend John Wesley differed on the doctrine of predestination. Both were Anglicans at the outset. Wesley's dedicated labors, riding, preaching, writing, and organizing, created the Methodist Church, which in England was recruited largely from those whom the Church of England had neglected. See also Methodism.

Robert Haldane, a Scottish seagoing merchant, having devoted his wealth to religious causes, went in 1815 to Geneva, where he led groups of students, imparting to them an evangelical zeal which later bore fruit in revival campaigns led by César Malan and others in France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Opposition forced the revivalist evangelicals to form free churches in Geneva, Bern, Zürich, Basel, Lyon, Paris, and a number of places in Germany.

With some exceptions, later revivals tended to be managed campaigns, with less of spontaneity, but they long remained an effective means of converting the negligent to a positive Christian stand. Preaching a simple gospel, in which hellfire was an ingredient, revivalists stirred up the frontiersmen in Kentucky and the Carolinas. A cumulative effect was obtained by means of camp meetings, with relays of preachers from different denominations. See also Camp Meeting.

Revivals have always been criticized by both dogmatists and liberals, and their defects are easily discerned. They have aimed at bringing about conversions by a directed process involving fear and guilt followed by assurance of salvation, and their leaders have usually presented Bible texts with uninformed literalism. But it is undeniable that they promoted good relations among denominations and greatly enlarged active church membership at a period when irreligion was rife. One of the most effective of revivalist figures was Dwight L. Moody. Unselfish, tolerant, and wisely constructive, he left a lasting influence in America and Britain.

In Roman Catholicism revival methods are very different. The attempt has been to revive the local parish through the services of members of religious orders under hierarchical direction. The missioners have been sent for short periods, but at fairly frequent intervals, to preach in the parishes and counsel inquirers. The missions have been designed to quicken the spiritual life of laypeople, and have been concerned more with instruction than with conversion. Voluntary movements in the same direction have generally been brought under clerical guidance. After 1848 the German bishops employed Jesuit and Capuchin missioners to preach plainly on sin and repentance, with impressive results. The Missionary Society of St. Paul (Paulist Fathers), founded in 1858, was a result of Isaac Hecker's mystical call to a similar work in America. Missions of this sort have become more general and frequent. The term "Catholic Action" has been applied, especially since 1928, to the apostolate of laypeople in their communities, notably in efforts to affirm Christian standards in labor, the arts, the press, and literature. Vatican Council II approved the many organizations that have arisen in this connection, describing their purpose as "the evangelization and sanctification of men, and the formation in them of a Christian conscience."

**Christianity Confronts Science and Marxism.**

In the 19th century, science offered an embarrassing challenge to Biblical theology. One of the most trying adjustments was demanded by Charles Darwin's presentation, with abundant data, of the theory of biological evolution. Most theologians were at first alarmed and hostile. But some Biblical scholars began to apply the principle of evolution in their interpretation of revelation itself. As Christian thinkers progressively made terms with the new science, opposition to it was aroused and became active; especially in America. Twelve volumes entitled *The Fundamentals* (1910–1915) were distributed in millions of copies and occasioned the Fundamentalist Controversy in the Protestant churches at the same time that a Liberal theology on good terms with science was developing in the seminaries.

In Roman Catholicism the problems raised by new knowledge were hardly less acute. Gregory XVI in 1832 and Pius IX in 1864 sternly rejected the Liberalism of their era, and in 1907, Pius X condemned the Modernists for errors that included an evolutionary view of history and Scripture. Some of the Modernists attributed their central ideas to John Henry Newman's *Development of Doctrine* (1845), the thesis of which they extended to combat the Thomist structure of theology prescribed by Leo XIII (1879).

Protestant Neoorthodoxy stood in the same loose relation to Søren Kierkegaard that Modernism did to Newman. Its chief prophet, Karl Barth, electrified the theological world by his *Romans* (1919), introducing a "theology of crisis," which, in rejection of Liberalism, reaffirmed Pauline, Augustinian, and Reformation doctrines of the divine initiative and the Bible as God's Word. In America, Reinhold Niebuhr similarly returned from Liberalism to Biblical and early Protestant points of emphasis.

The antireligious dialectical materialism of Karl Marx (set forth in *Das Kapital,* 1867), which sees history as primarily economic struggle, came at a time when Christians showed little interest in those economically oppressed, and Marxism may have helped to arouse Christian social concern. Institutionalized in Communist states, engaged in constant revolutionary propaganda, and representing itself as humankind's ultimate system of belief, materialism both menaces and stimulates Christianity.

**Educational and Social Work.**

The record of the church as teacher and founder of schools has been maintained from medieval into modern times, though educational standards have not always been high. In the United States an attempt to provide education for the spreading frontier settlements resulted in the founding of some 500 denominational colleges before the Civil War. A majority of them also failed before the war. In the surviving schools, and those later founded, denominationalism has largely vanished, and standards have been raised. Theological seminaries have multiplied, and a few of them have attained high scholarly standards, not without the contribution of many teachers trained in Europe. Public school education has increasingly excluded religion, leaving, for most Protestants, the religious instruction of children to the home and the Sunday school. Parochial schools, promoted especially by Roman Catholics in the 19th century, have given prominence to religious subjects.

In Germany, Christian instruction has been given in state schools, and this plan was maintained under new regulations in West Germany after World War II. German schools of theology were very active in the 19th century, and in the later 20th century have recovered much of the intellectual strength they lost in the war period.

England has provided Christian teaching for the young since the government assumed the control of education in 1870, maintaining continuity with the work done previously in parish schools. In 1944 an agreement was reached by which non-Anglican churches have a voice in the syllabus for religion used in each county. Scotland's system of parish schools was maintained under church control until 1918, and religious instruction has been continued in the national schools under the guidance of the Joint Committee for Religious Education. The Religious Education Association has worked in America since 1903 "to inspire religious forces with the educational ideal and educational forces with the religious ideal," and a similar purpose prevails widely elsewhere. See also Sunday School; Theological Education.

Innumerable medieval hospitals, and relief foundations by Reformation, Puritan, and Pietist Christians, testified to the Christian sense of social duty. The group of Anglican Evangelicals derisively called "the Clapham Sect" initiated many philanthropies and began the movement for the emancipation of slaves, a reform achieved for the British dominions in 1834. Nationally influential leaders of the antislavery cause in America included William Lloyd Garrison and Theodore Dwight Weld. Christian educational and relief agencies distribute funds on an increasing scale, and with planned intent to ensure permanent benefits to the receiver. Numerous British writers from about 1850 sought to apply the notion of the Kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching to social and economic issues.

In America the term "Social Gospel" came into use in the 1890s to designate a type of Christian social teaching that arose amid the industrial struggles of that era. It challenged the assumption of laissez-faire business that the poor were to blame for their poverty and proposed reforms in favor of the working class. Begun by Congregational and Baptist ministers, the Social Gospel penetrated most communions. These came to adopt "social creeds" and to set up departments of social service. The theological weakness of the movement was in part amended by Walter Rauschenbusch in *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917). But an age of world struggle called for a more critical theological analysis of social problems, and this was introduced by Reinhold Niebuhr, notably in *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1941). Roman Catholicism also manifested a greatly intensified activity in social reform.

**Art, Literature, and Music.**

Renaissance art, inspired by classic models, turned from symbolism to naturalism, portraying the human form in the colorful garb of the age, or in the nude, with a realism that was controlled only by the sheer love of visual beauty. Artists were self-conscious and ambitious: leaving behind medieval anonymity they wrote spiritedly about their work. Religious themes were treated not without reverence but in a new humanist spirit. Leonardo da Vinci studied the Apostles as historical persons and depicted them as men of character sharing a dramatic moment. See Renaissance Art.

In the baroque era, Rembrandt and Rubens treated biblical themes under Calvinist and Roman Catholic influence respectively. The 18th century rococo style turned not only to excessive ornamentation but to scenes of dramatic emotion.

In music, a noble hymnody arose under Luther's inspiration, and sacred chorales were popular, the words being in some instances devout parodies on popular songs. The French Psalter was the contribution of Calvin's Geneva, Louis Bourgeois and Claude Goudimel providing the music for Clement Marot's and Theodore Beza's verse translations. Enthusiastic outdoor psalm singing came to be a feature of the spread of Calvinism in France and the Netherlands. The most learned musician of the age was Giovanni Palestrina, who as choir director of St. Peter's, Rome, wrote masses in great numbers, many of them, in accordance with decisions of the Council of Trent, based on themes from Gregorian chant. The early 18th century was the era of a vastly enriched and assuredly immortal church music in the works of Bach and Handel.

The growth of humanist literature, as in the works of Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Shakespeare, led away from exclusive concentration on religion. The 18th century saw the popularity of authors indifferent or cynically hostile to traditional Christianity in fields of historical scholarship (notably Diderot, Voltaire, and Gibbon), anecdotal biography, and fiction. Friedrich Schleiermacher was addressing a potentially vast reading public in his *Discourses on Religion to its Cultured Despisers* (1799). One phase of the romantic movement in literature was a nostalgia for medieval scenes (exemplified by Chateaubriand, Scott, and Coleridge), and romanticism played a part in the formation of Schleiermacher's theology of feeling. But the new science of subsequent decades, and the interpretation placed upon it by some philosophers (for example, Herbert Spencer), enhanced the general trend toward materialism and secularism in 19th century thought. Nevertheless the materialist epitaph on Christianity, pronounced most vociferously by Friedrich Nietzsche, was illusory.

**Recent Phases**

**Updating.**

The revolutionary changes of our era have made Christians more than ever conscious of the need to bring their message and methods abreast of the times. This has been strikingly evident in Roman Catholicism, especially since 1958 when John XXIII became pope. Viewing the gravity of the world's problems as well as those of the church, Pope John summoned the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) specifically with the intent of bringing about a modernization, or updating, of the church in all its parts as an instrument of grace in the world. Its agencies of service and social action, relations with other churches and with non-Christians, methods and emphases in teaching, liturgical worship, the functions of persons in religious orders and of lay members—indeed all the church's essential components—were scrutinized and regulated. Numerous Orthodox and Protestant observers were in constant attendance and were cordially welcomed.

The texts of the council's debates and decisions are impressive both for their matter and for the evidence they offer of the openness of mind and charitable concern for all that have replaced the armed dogmatism of most earlier councils. There is no retreat from earlier positions, but there is a new emphasis and a new, chastened, and teachable spirit. Atheistic communism is "sorrowfully but firmly repudiated"; but there are no anathemas or loftily uttered denunciations. The episcopal order has "a collegiate character" as shown by the historic role of bishops in ecumenical councils. As successors of the apostles, bishops are associated with the pope in his infallible deliverances. The measure of autonomy they exercise in their pastoral office is enlarged; specifically they are not "vicars of the Roman pontiffs." The position and functions of the laity are specially examined "in view of the circumstances of our time." Laypeople are admonished to make Christ known "especially by a life resplendent in faith." Irrespective of race or sex, all lay members of the church, which in its entirety is "a priestly community," are to be joined in one lay apostolate, by which in family life, daily work, and eucharistic worship they "consecrate the world itself to God." Laypeople participate in the evangelization of the world, and by the quality of their work and the equitable distribution of its products, they help to make moral values prevail in society. Many new regulations for religious communities are approved; their manner of life is to be "adapted to modern circumstances"—physical, psychological, social, and economic. To effect suitable changes, bishops are enjoined to hold territorial conferences under rules of their own approved by the pope. No doubt some cautious decentralization is intended in such decisions. The radical alteration, effective January 1, 1968, of the constitution of the Roman Curia distributes its membership geographically and provides for a renewal of key personnel at each papal election. Certainly a comprehensive spiritual and administrative renewal was begun; and Vatican II affirmed principles that would seem to make impossible any future stage of immobility in Roman Catholicism. See also Vatican Council, Second.

The active features of recent Protestantism include many that continue 19th century impulses. The 1880s saw anticipations of a later wide development of organizations for youth, and also the settlement movement, providing friendly aid to immigrants and disadvantaged persons. Later social action has taken many forms in slum areas, including storefront churches with modest institutional equipment and coffeehouses under church auspices. Many prayer groups have been springing up, some with a social concern. Christians have supported, sometimes through church action, the causes of civil rights and world peace, and virtually all units of the church give substantially to funds for international relief.

Mention of the well-known names of Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Reinhold Niebuhr calls attention to the variety, liveliness, and challenge of 20th century Protestant theology. Nikolai Berdyaev in Orthodoxy, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in Roman Catholicism have been no less impressive. All of these have found an ecclesiastically unrestricted public and have helped to set the trend of contemporary thought.

**Liturgical Renewal.**

Since 1900 a revival of liturgical worship has been a feature of church life. While the liturgical renewal is historically informed, it is far from reactionary, but rather daringly progressive. From 1954 Pope Pius XII introduced a number of liturgical reforms, including evening Masses, lay responses, and congregational singing. Vatican II set forth clearly the principles of public worship, authorizing several departures from earlier use. Liturgical studies are to receive major attention in seminaries; priests are to instruct their people in worship; and the people are to participate with "acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons and hymns." Adaptations to national cultures may be made, and the use of the mother tongue in the Mass is to be extended at the discretion of the bishops' conferences. A large use of the vernacular is also encouraged in baptism, the anointing of the sick, and matrimony. There are provisions for the improvement of sacred music and of the art objects and furnishings in churches. The reforms authorized are comprehensive, and not less impressive is the expectation conveyed that such reforms are to continue. (See also Catholic Church, Roman—Liturgy.)

In the Anglican Church the worship ideals of the Tractarian movement were largely lost in a tendency to magnify ritual details of gesture and incense; but the deeper message of the Tractarians slowly bore fruit in a revived concern for reality in worship affecting many Protestant communions. The Scottish church was awakened by the innovations, at the time startling rather than persuasive, of Robert Lee, who founded the Church Worship Society in 1865. Gradual changes followed in Scottish and worldwide Presbyterianism. The Reformed and Presbyterian churches were by 1900 at an early stage of liturgical reform; most eventually published revised books of worship and hymnals, and experiments continued. Lutheran reform in worship was cumulative after about 1850, showing a trend toward the judicious use of the "liturgies of the ecumenical church." In several instances the union of two or more churches occasioned the production of a new manual of worship, as occurred in the United Church of Canada in 1932 and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany in 1948. Higher standards were achieved in instrumental church music and the quality of hymn texts. These improvements rested on the work of eminent musicologists and editors as well as of composers.

**The Ecumenical Movement.**

The principle of Christian unity, now incorporated in all typical theologies, has always had its eager exponents. In former centuries the advocates for unity were hindered by political and geographical barriers and, still more, by theological disputes, which continue to rend the church. But the 20th century witnessed some reversal of the divisive trend. After the World Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh in 1910, most Christian churches were drawn into a movement—since 1937 called the ecumenical movement—seeking worldwide Christian spiritual and corporate unity. Nathan Söderblom, its prophetic leader of the 1920s, spoke of it as the ecumenical revival, a felicitous term alluding to the renewal of the spirit of communion of apostolic times. The movement has been stimulated by study of the early church and no doubt also by the dangers that confront the severed parts of the church in a world of secular power. Its organizational aspect should not be mistaken for the movement itself, which is basically spiritual, born of a greatly deepened sense of the reality of unity in Christ.

The movement made itself visible in many forms of local cooperation across denominational lines, comity and coordinated efforts in missions and social work, national and regional councils of churches, and a series of worldwide conferences. In 1948, after delays caused by war, these culminated in the formation of the World Council of Churches, with 147 member churches and headquarters in Geneva. By the early 21st century the council had more than 340 member churches in more than 100 countries. Representatives of the chief Protestant and Orthodox churches and of the ancient regional churches of the Middle East mingle in committees and conferences with those from churches of modern mission origin. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the council; however, it has worked in close partnership with it since the 1970s. The council does not directly initiate nor does it promote the union of denominations. Scores of such acts of union have taken place spontaneously; many are under negotiation.

Christianity addresses itself with alertness to the modern world, renews its life of worship, and moves toward unity of spirit and purpose. Yet it is continually confronted by new perils and demands and constant interior reform and renewal.

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